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New York

President:	Mr. Rycroft	(United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Llorentty Soliz
	China	Mr. Wu Haitao
	Egypt	Mr. Aboulatta
	Ethiopia	Mr. Alemu
	France	Mr. Delattre
	Italy	Mr. Cardi
	Japan	Mr. Bessho
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Umarov
	Russian Federation	Mr. Iliichev
	Senegal	Mr. Seck
	Sweden	Mr. Skoog
	Ukraine	Mr. Yelchenko
	United States of America	Ms. Sison
	Uruguay	Mr. Rosselli

Agenda

The situation in the Central African Republic

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Central African Republic

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of the Central African Republic to participate in this meeting.

On behalf of the Council, I welcome His Excellency Mr. Faustin Archange Touadéra, President of the Central African Republic. I request the Protocol Officer to escort President Touadéra to a seat at the Council table.

Mr. Faustin Archange Touadéra, President of the Central African Republic, was escorted to a seat at the Council table.

The President: In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Hervé Ladsous, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, and His Excellency Mr. Omar Hilale, Permanent Representative of Morocco, in his capacity as Chair of the Central African Republic configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I give the floor to President Touadéra.

President Touadéra (*spoke in French*): It is both an honour and a pleasure for me today to address the Security Council for the first time on an issue that is of particular importance to me, that is, peace in the Central African Republic. I would like to take this opportunity to thank you, Sir, and through you the entire Security Council, for the time being devoted to my country despite the Security Council's busy schedule for this month, as well as for inviting me to speak.

My country is grateful for the Security Council's full support for its efforts aimed at ending the violent crisis that it has experienced and for its determination to silence the guns so as to achieve a just and lasting peace. I would also like to express our deep gratitude to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) under the leadership of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Parfait Onanga-Anyanga, whom I commend for his excellent cooperation with the Central African authorities and his ceaseless commitment to ensure peace and protection for civilians in all regions of the Central African Republic.

This meeting provides a new opportunity to take stock of the evolution of the political and security situation in the Central African Republic, a major focus of the United Nations, which has continued to vigorously support us since the holding of the latest general elections at the end of 2016.

We have come a long way, from the transition period to the elections and the appointment of legitimate national authorities. In taking the reins of the country, I have audaciously bet on change, reconstruction and economic development despite a security environment that remains volatile. Our priority continues to be security and the pacification of the entire country. The establishment of the committee on disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation and reintegration (DDRR) programme, the reform of the security sector reform and national reconciliation are the result of that prioritization, which affords an opportunity for all armed groups to find solutions by consensus with the Government with regard to the issue of the DDRR programme and some of their concerns through dialogue.

On this solemn occasion, I welcome the decision of the Front populaire pour la renaissance de la Centrafrique and Maxime Mokom's anti-Balaka group to finally join the process by nominating their representatives to the advisory and monitoring committee for the national DDRR programme. That is a decisive step that will enable us to go further in the effective implementation of that important programme for the return to peace. All 14 armed groups will be represented at the next meeting of the committee, scheduled for 23 March.

Although we have made some progress, the Central African Republic needs substantial resources to launch the necessary reforms. Since the Brussels Conference, we have been working with our partners to develop the monitoring and assessment framework for the National Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan, as well as to implement the Mutual Engagement Framework. Those fundamental elements for restoring peace and rebuilding the economy must go hand in hand.

We regret the fact that, despite efforts by MINUSCA, some armed groups refuse to lay down

their weapons and continue to mount their offensive. By adopting a firm stance, through its mandate and with my consent, MINUSCA has been able to protect civilians, avert efforts to divide the country and, above all, force armed groups reluctant to join the DDRR/security sector reform/national reconciliation process to at last appoint representatives to the DDRR advisory and monitoring committee.

It is important to note that the ongoing military action by MINUSCA in Bombari is an exception and does not disregard the importance of dialogue in achieving a lasting solution. I hope that that initiative will lead to a final concrete outcome in the operationalization of the DDRR/security sector reform/national reconciliation process. I would like to express our gratitude to the international community and to neighbouring countries that have provided invaluable support in the areas of DDRR and security sector reform, in particular the Central African Economic and Monetary Community, which allotted CAF 2 billion to the DDR process. The ongoing recruitment of 500 police officers with the support of MINUSCA, training for our security forces provided by the European Union Military Training Mission in the Central African Republic and the commitment of some countries in the subregion have led to the establishment of Central African Republic armed forces battalions.

At this juncture in my presentation, I would like to highlight that I am concerned about the pace of the training provided to the armed forces by the European Union's Military Training Mission. The training process is slow and does not allow us in the short term to have enough personnel to assist in restoring peace and calm to the country and protecting civilians. It is for that reason that I ask the Security Council to assist us in finding a faster way — through bilateral or multilateral cooperation — to train our armed forces, in addition to the training provided by the European Union's Military Training Mission, because the security challenges are immense. The country is very large, and that calls for more training and the deployment of an even greater number of soldiers. In addition, I would like to point out concerns about furnishing trained armed forces of the Central African Republic with military equipment and other logistical tools, as it is very difficult for us to put trained soldiers on the ground without adequate equipment in areas of the country facing threats to peace and people's safety. We have approximately 8,000 soldiers whom we cannot deploy because they have not yet completed their training due to insufficient resources.

I mention those facts because there is a close link between security and development in the Central African Republic. After many years of conflict, the entire population, so badly in need of infrastructure and basic services, longs for development, and that can be achieved only if security exists. The need for security therefore demands a higher number of trained defence and security personnel, with adequate resources and deployed on the ground alongside United Nations forces, currently working alone because Central African Republic forces are not yet operational.

Conflicts between armed groups continue in the interior of the country and result in many lives lost and widespread destruction. That is why we are more than ever determined to put professional national forces on the ground, working in conjunction with MINUSCA, to protect civilians. I thank the Security Council, which approved a robust mandate for MINUSCA to help us to emerge from the crisis. But it is also important to consider strengthening MINUSCA by increasing its personnel and material resources to enable it to better discharge its mandate. For I can see for myself the challenges it faces daily given the size of the country and the complex problems on the ground that require additional resources.

We are open to constructive dialogue. We support African initiatives towards peace and reconciliation aimed at bolstering our own efforts. However, I would like to reassure the Council of our commitment to respecting the recommendations put forward by the Bangui Forum, in particular on impunity and justice in the context of all political agreements. We ask for amnesty be granted to the perpetrators of serious crimes and other breaches of the law, forgetting that amnesty is a legislative measure that cannot be used by the executive branch. All efforts must reflect the legitimate hopes of the Central African people as expressed at the Bangui Forum, as well as the provisions of the Constitution. Nonetheless, we remain open to discussions on the issue. At the same time, justice will be handed down in due course and without compromising on principles. The appointment of a special criminal prosecutor and the operationalization of the special criminal court, with the support of our partners, will enable us to meet the expectations of a people who have suffered so much from this crisis and who quite rightly demand justice.

As the Council is aware, the humanitarian situation remains critical. We must meet immense needs. People in the interior of my country continue to flee their homes, seeking refuge elsewhere and ending up in makeshift sites. I make an urgent appeal to the international community to redouble its efforts and give us the necessary support to enable displaced persons to return to their homes.

Despite a challenging environment, our partners continue to provide support. We commend their commitment, which is a sign of international solidarity. The visit to our country on 11 March by Mr. Makhtar Diop, World Bank Vice-President for the Africa Region, reflects that organization's interest in helping us relaunch socioeconomic development. We are also reassured by the recent visit by Ms. Christine Lagarde, Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund, as well as other high-level partners. In turn, we reassure them of our absolute willingness to demonstrate good governance and to be unwavering in our fight against corruption — a scourge that has long undermined our institutions.

The Central African Republic is at a crossroads in its quest for lasting peace, reconstruction and development. Its people are tired of the crises caused by armed groups that hold socioeconomic development hostage. I have always advocated change. There is indeed too little progress, however we firmly intend to proceed along the path to the country's development and reconstruction.

The town of Bombari, in the prefecture of Ouaka, is a pilot project. With the support of MINUSCA and our partners, we hope to strengthen our presence, refurbish administrative buildings and provide basic social services — in short, ensure that some sense of normalcy returns by restoring State authority. We must build on efforts supported by the international community. Rebuilding the country requires the participation of all parties: central and local administrations, the private sector, civil society and international partners.

I have given the Council a description of the political and security situation in the Central African Republic. We thank you, Mr. President, for having given us this opportunity to speak about the Central African Republic, in particular in the light of the current challenges, and about the need for the international community to continue its support.

The President: I thank His Excellency President Touadéra very much for his statement.

I now give the floor to Mr. Ladsous.

Mr. Ladsous (*spoke in French*): It is a great pleasure for me to address the Security Council in the presence of His Excellency President Faustin Archange Touadéra, whom I welcome to the Chamber. His presence here provides us with a unique opportunity not only to update the Council on the progress made, but also to take a moment to reflect on the challenges we face and the solutions we should envision as partners.

If we recall the situation almost a year ago, the presidential and legislative elections were taking place. They marked an important milestone in the country's history following a prolonged crisis that brought the Central African Republic to the edge of the abyss. Much progress has been made in the country over the past 12 months thank to the tireless efforts of the President himself and the Government and the people of the Central African Republic. That progress is especially reflected in improved security in the capital, the adoption of a number of crucial reforms and accelerated efforts to advance security sector reform, establish the rule of law and bolster the fight against impunity. We must acknowledge that this progress is promising. Nonetheless, there are still formidable challenges. That is why we must remain more firmly committeed than ever to this issue.

Since my briefing to the Council on 15 February (see S/PV.7884), the political and operational engagement of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) has made it possible for important progress to be made, that is, restoring State authority in the strategically important city of Bambari, thereby demonstrating the extent to which the peacekeeping operation can be a critical tool to support change in the country. MINUSCA used its air assets twice to prevent the advances of the Front populaire pour la renaissance de la Centrafrique (FPRC), which was directly threatening the civilian population, and successfully facilitated the departure from Bambari of the leader of the Union pour la paix en Centrafrique, Mr. Ali Darassa, and of other armed group commanders. MINUSCA also apprehended, on 26 February, three leaders of the FPRC-led coalition in Bambari, who have since been formally charged by the national judicial authorities on a number of counts.

MINUSCA did what was necessary to restore security in Bambari and to fend off efforts by the armed groups who were trying to take the town by force. MINUSCA's presence is also intended to pave the way for the stabilization of the town over the long term and to restore State authority. A detachment of 31 gendarmes arrived in Bambari on 9 March, and three magistrates were in place the following day. The United Nations system is also supporting a series of coordinated short- and medium-term plans to promote community dialogue and social cohesion, revive the local economy and improve access to education and health care.

As President Touadéra stated earlier, the operation in Bambari yielded a political dividend in that both the FPRC and the anti-Balaka faction led by Maxime Mokom have now agreed to designate representatives to the advisory follow-up committee on the disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation (DDRR) process, led by the President. All 14 of the main armed groups have now joined the Committee, whose first meeting, I believe, is scheduled for 23 March. That would have not been possible without the tireless efforts of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of MINUSCA.

The progress that has been achieved is significant, but it should not obscure the fact that neither military force alone nor DDRR programmes will resolve the armed group problem that plagues the country. Successful disarmament requires that all groups wholeheartedly commit themselves and that a broad agreement that responds, first and foremost, to the aspirations of the population and the armed groups is put in place. Past experiences in the Central African Republic and in other contexts demonstrate that we must not give up on our efforts. We must persist, and our efforts must be accompanied by financial support. In that respect, allow me to express my appreciation for the announcement by World Bank Vice-President for the Africa Region, Mr. Makhtar Diop, together with President Touadéra , that the World Bank would to provide $30 million for the national DDRR programme. This must all be carried out.

I would also like to underscore the importance of President Touadéras determination to step up the dialogue with the armed groups, while at the same time ensuring that the voices of the population, and in particular the victims of the conflict, are heard. The subregion, which has stood by the Central African Republic since the crisis erupted in 2012, has a critical role to play in support of the dialogue efforts. That is why the Secretary-General has publically expressed his support for the African initiative for a peace and reconciliation agreement between the Government and all armed groups. We welcome the commitment of all members of the African initiative and we hope that it strengthens President Touadéra's efforts in connection with the armed groups, while respecting the outcomes and recommendations of the Bangui Forum, including by addressing in a mutually supportive way the imperatives for justice and reconciliation in full respect of the strong and legitimate expectations of the Central African people.

The Government of President Touadéra has demonstrated its support for the establishment of the special criminal court to ensure that impunity does not prevail for the most serious crimes. We are aware of the consequences that the culture of impunity has had in the past in his country. That must all be brought to an end. The appointment of a special prosecutor of the court, the current accelerating rate in the recruitment process for national magistrates and judicial police, the adoption of a strategy to protect victims and witnesses and the support of Council members for the court are all important so that transitional justice efforts are given the means to finally addre < the deplorable legacy of human rights abuses.

The international community's solidarity with the Central African people was demonstrated through the pledging of over $2.2 billion at the Brussels Conference in November. More than ever, I urge the countries that demonstrated such generosity to keep their promises so that development projects can finally begin and accelerate.

We should also not forget the serious humanitarian situation that the country is facing. More than 2 million Central Africans, more than half the total population, are in need of assistance, particularly food assistance. I believe that number represents the highest ratio in the world today, and we cannot ignore it. In that regard, too, we need donors to make good on their generous pledges so that we can do everything possible to support the efforts of the Central African authorities to facilitate the return of displaced persons and refugees to their homes.

In conclusion, with regard to the vision that President Touadéra has just outlined to the Security Council, I

would like to reiterate that he has the continued support of the United Nations and MINUSCA, and in Bambari we have been able to prove that. I believe that in its entire history the Central African Republic has rarely, if ever, received such a level of support and commitment. We therefore count on the President more than ever to ensure that all the priorities outlined in the Mutual Engagement Framework and the National Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan are fully implemented, with a view to transforming the daily lives of all Central Africans. It is also essential that the rest of the country's institutions work in concert with the Government to advance those commitments in a spirit that must be guided by the country's interests. More than ever, it is time for national unity if we are to overcome all these challenges.

The gains that have been made in the Central African Republic over the past three years, in particular over the past 12 months, have shown that United Nations peacekeeping operations in Africa can make a real difference. When our operations have good leadership and the right capabilities, they can play an irreplaceable role — in support of national efforts and together with international partners — in promoting and supporting the reforms that are essential to a lasting solution to a conflict and to stability. Since the beginning of the crisis, the Council has provided indispensable support to the Central African Republic. Now it is time to consolidate our achievements and make practical progress in stabilizing the country — and the region, since everything is connected — and for that we need major political support from the Council and robust support and sufficient resources for MINUSCA. Because, and let us say it out loud, if the situation continues to develop as positively as it has been recently, MINUSCA will not have to prolong its stay in the Central African Republic. While we cannot deny that the road will still be long and sometimes difficult, I am firmly convinced that, with the commitment of the Central African Republic and the sustained assistance of the international community, the country will be able to succeed in closing this sad chapter in its history and move resolutely towards a promising future.

The President: I thank Mr. Ladsous for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Hilale.

Mr. Hilale (*spoke in French*): I have the honour to speak today on behalf of the members of the Central African Republic country configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission. It is an honour and a pleasure to address the Security Council at this meeting on the Central African Republic, held during the visit of His Excellency Mr. Faustin Archange Touadéra, President of the Central African Republic. I would also like to thank you, Mr. President, for organizing today's meeting despite the Council's busy workload this month, and for your kind invitation to me.

This meeting is a concrete demonstration of the synergies between the Security Council and the Peacebuilding Commission, with the ultimate aim of promoting the conditions necessary for sustaining peace. And there is no better example of that than the Central African Republic, where in the past, unfortunately, the international community's premature withdrawal contributed to the country's relapse into conflict. Although the security situation remains volatile, with a recent outbreak of attacks by some armed groups, today we are in a better situation, with the restoration of constitutional order, an ambitious National Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan, which received strong support at the Brussels Conference for donors, and the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), a multidimensional mission with an expanded mandate.

This morning, we held a meeting of the Central African Republic country configuration, elevated by the presence of the President of the Republic and Mr. Parfait Onanga-Anyanga, Special Representative of the Secretary-General. The visit of President Touadéra sends a strong signal to the international community of his own and his Government's determination to lead the efforts to restore peace and security in the Central African Republic. The members of the configuration unanimously reaffirmed to the President their unwavering commitment to continuing their productive collaboration with the Government of the Central African Republic and to working with the United Nations system as a whole under the leadership of Mr. Onanga-Anyanga, whom I commend and thank for his excellent cooperation with the configuration, and with regional and subregional organizations and international partners, in support of the efforts to ensure lasting peace in the Central African Republic.

We were able to ensure the members' support for the configuration's programme of work, which was recently presented to the Council and which consists mainly of meetings devoted to each of the three pillars of the National Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan,

bringing together all the relevant stakeholders — the United Nations, the European Union and the World Bank — to discuss how best to support the efforts of the Government and its partners. To that end, we will intensify our coordination and collaboration with the three main partners handling the implementation of the Recovery Plan, under the leadership of the Central African authorities — the United Nations, for the first pillar of support to peace, security and reconciliation; the European Union, for the second pillar, the restoration of the social contract between the people and the Government; and the World Bank for the third pillar, promoting economic recovery and support to the productive sectors.

With its proposed programme of work for the coming months, the configuration has established an ambitious medium- and long-term goal, which is to make the Central African Republic a model of success for the United Nations, for peacebuilding in general and in particular for the concept of sustaining peace, enshrined last year in resolution 2282 (2016) and General Assembly resolution 70/282. In that regard, the main elements needed for lasting peace are, first, responsibility on the part of the national authorities for identifying national priorities and translating them into strategies, as reflected in this case in the National Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan; and, secondly, the role of the Peacebuilding Commission in promoting and coordinating all efforts and platforms by bringing together the various peacebuilding stakeholders.

We are confident that the existing coordination mechanisms, and those that are virtually finalized, will enable us to facilitate coordination among key partners and, through that, the implementation of the National Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan. We should recall at this point that the Peacebuilding Commission remains committed to facilitating the coordination of the various actors here in New York and to ensuring that the efforts complement one another. In that regard, I intend to visit the Central African Republic soon to talk to the main national and international partners in the country about the principal challenges to the implementation of the National Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan and about ways and means of optimizing our support to the Government in order to overcome those challenges. When I return, I will consult with the members of the country-specific configuration and the Security Council how to garner the support necessary for the national authorities.

In conclusion, I wish to thank the countries of the region for their continuing support for the Central African Republic and for their most recent mediation initiative, involving the African Union, the Economic Community of Central African States, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, the Congo, Chad and Angola. I also commend the Council's efforts to keep the Central African Republic high on its agenda. The organization of an interactive dialogue on African mediation is an excellent illustration of that commitment and will allow Council members to explore possibilities for support.

The Peacebuilding Commission stands ready to lend its full support, knowing that all actors involved in the process are members of the Central African Republic country-specific configuration.

The President: I thank Mr. Hilale for his briefing.

I give the floor to those Council members who wish to make statements.

Mr. Delattre (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank the United Kingdom presidency for convening this important public meeting. In addition to Under-Secretary-General Hervé Ladsous and the Permanent Representative of Morocco, Mr. Omar Hilale, I especially thank His Excellency President Faustin Archange Touadéra for travelling to New York and for the important briefing he has just provided to the Council.

President Touadéra is well aware of the degree to which the Council has mobilized to promote his efforts to make the establishment of peace and reconciliation in the Central African Republic an exemplary success. He can count on our unwavering support. We also commend the commitment of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Central African Republic and Head of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), Mr. Parfait Onanga-Anyanga, who is on the ground beside President Touadéra every day in the Central African Republic.

The Central African Republic is not yet fully stabilized, as fighting persists among armed groups. It has been said and bears repeating that the perpetrators are motivated by a criminal logic of predation, control of territory and resources, and the perpetuation of violence unconnected to any political claims. France soundly condemns these criminal opportunists who

thrive on civilian suffering and instability. In that context, I wish to highlight three main messages.

First and foremost, I wish to convey to President Touadéra, himself a message of support for him and for his work. As we all know, he was democratically elected under excellent conditions by a broad majority of Central African citizens throughout the entire national territory. He immediately positioned himself as the President of all Central Africans under a reconciliation and reform programme. His inaugural speech was welcomed as a model of its kind and his travels in the provinces, such as to Bambari and Ouaka on Sunday, testify to his commitment.

Everyone knows that President Touadéra has spared no effort in translating his message of peace, justice, reconciliation and reform into action. I could cite multiple examples, but I will highlight only two very illustrative ones: his establishment of the platform for dialogue and disarmament, whose work he himself supervises; and his idea of creating a mixed Central African Armed Forces (FACA) unit by integrating demobilized veterans, for which he requested support from the European Union (EU) military training mission in the Central African Republic.

He is committed to a dynamic based on sustainable reconstruction of the country, taking care to address the root causes of the crisis, particularly the impunity of perpetrators of crimes, which has long nourished cycles of violence in the Central African Republic. He is committed to the special criminal court and to restoring the national justice system. Like usm President Touadéra is convinced that the crisis plaguing his country will find its solution through regional cooperation. Based on that logic, he immediately visited with the Heads of States of the region. In all of those and other endeavours, he may rest assured of France's unwavering support and, I believe, that of the Council as a whole for his efforts.

My second message is one of full support for the efforts of MINUSCA and its Head, Special Representative Mr. Parfait Onanga-Anyanga. The Security Council has deployed MINUSCA to support the President of the Central African Republic, and its complex mandate reflects the great variety of measures to be taken there. A great deal has already been accomplished, despite the numerous challenges remaining.

Today, MINUSCA is a fully operational partner. It has a robust and comprehensive mandate focused on the strategic objective of reducing the presence of armed groups and the threat they represent in the Central African Republic. In that regard, I would like to send a message of support to MINUSCA, particularly in the light of its recent actions in the central region of the country. By acting decisively, including by using force to defend its mandate, MINUSCA is establishing its credibility and demonstrating to the armed groups that the only way ahead is the political path.

In terms of international support for the Central African Republic, I also wish to highlight the initial results of the EU military training mission, which completed the reform and training of a first FACA unit. A first battalion will be fully trained by May.

My third message concerns the need to work together and in coordination in the same direction. We are many in a position to help the Central African Republic recover. There is the United Nations, of course, and other international partners, including the World Bank and the African Bank; regional partners, including the African Union, the Economic Community of Central African States, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region; the EU and bilateral partners. Such attention is good news. It has positive effects, such as the financial mobilization in Brussels in November, where France announced an €85-million contribution over three years.

But that widespread mobilization — which, I reiterate, is necessary — is beneficial only when precisely coordinated in order to avoid duplication of efforts. Ultimately, the important thing is that the assistance will truly benefit stabilization and development of the Central African Republic. The coordination role is key. It is the responsibility, among others, of the Peacebuilding Commission country-specific configuration for the Central African Republic, which was convened this morning by the Moroccan leadership, and whose efforts I commend.

Moreover, the general mobilization is beneficial only if based on the same frame of reference, with full support for President Touadéra and his Government. The frame of reference is clear — it is that identified by the Central Africans themselves at the Bangui Forum on National Reconciliation; reiterated in the Republican Pact for Peace, National Reconciliation and Reconstruction in the Central African Republic and integrated in the programme of the President of the

Central African Republic; and further enshrined in the relevant Security Council resolutions.

We are fortunate to support a dynamic that could be virtuous and restore sustainable stability in the country. That is why President Touadéra was elected and why the Council has demonstrated its commitment. In the coming days, we will propose a draft presidential statement to the Security Council. I reiterate our full support to President Touadéra in fulfilling his noble mandate.

Mr. Aboulatta (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to welcome His Excellency President Touadéra and express our deep gratitude for his presence among us today. I also thank him for the important messages in his statement that reflect the great challenges that the Central African Republic is facing and that at the same time affirm the determination of the people of the country and their strong will to overcome all their difficulties.

The preservation of the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic and the restoration of the constitutional order through the adoption of legislation establishing a constitutional court and other institutions were some of the successful steps taken in the recent period. Today, we are at a critical juncture, in which the crisis that began at the end of 2012 together and the violence and recurring crises that have shaken the country since its independence are settled and in which sustained peace has been achieved. Accordingly, we would like to refer to a number of priorities, as follows.

First, national reconciliation is the main priority for establishing solid grounds for peace. We therefore support all the efforts of President Touadéra and affirm the importance of the inclusivity of the process, whose aim is to restore the social fabric and address grievances, particularly those of marginalized parties, including refugees and internally displaced persons. We also affirm the importance of all regional and international partners rallying in support of these efforts. Accordingly, we welcome the African mediation initiative launched at the latest Summit in Addis Ababa, particularly in that it includes the African Union (AU), African regional organizations and the main countries of the region, all of which have offered critical support to the Central African Republic, without which it would have been impossible to emerge from the transitional phase. These regional partners are the most qualified to sponsor the national reconciliation and empower President Touadéra's efforts, assuming that it enjoys the necessary international support. We also welcome the ongoing dialogue between the Security Council and the African Union to decide on the best way to support the initiative and guarantee the coherence of efforts among the partners.

Secondly, we affirm the importance of putting an end to the violence of armed groups, which exacts a great price from civilians and exacerbates the country's already difficult circumstances. In this regard, I note the great responsibility of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), which requires us to empower the Mission to carry out its mandate. The strategic review of the mandate was an important step in this regard. It affirmed the need to halt the activities of armed groups. Accordingly, the voluntary engagement of armed groups in the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process is one of the important pillars of reconciliation, and the international community must avoid making the mistakes that led to previous failures in the history of the Central African Republic. We must mobilize the resources necessary to rebuild the national security and defence forces on the basis of professionalism, pluralism and discipline in order to regain authority over the country's territory in its entirety.

Thirdly, sustained peace requires a long-term vision to rebuild the State institutions and lay the foundation for economic recovery and development. We therefore welcome the important measures taken by the authorities, including the National Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan, in which national priorities for the next five years are identified. In this regard, we welcome the support of partners for the Plan expressed at the Brussels Conference and the African Union Solidarity Conference that was held following the latest AU Summit with a view to promoting the contributions of African nations in peacebuilding in the Central African Republic. In this regard, I stress the Peacebuilding Commission's importance as a platform that brings together many international, national, regional partners. The Commission has an important role to play in coordinating efforts in support of national priorities and has the necessary expertise and relationship with the Security Council to ensure the Plan's success and realize the concept of sustained peace.

Ms. Sison (United States of America): I thank President Touadéra for briefing us this afternoon here in the Security Council and for his tireless efforts to advance peace and development in the Central African Republic. We know the challenges he faces are many, but we know also that he has already consolidated gains. We stand ready to work with him to rebuild the Central African Republic. I also thank Under-Secretary-General Ladsous and Ambassador Hilale for their briefings. We welcome the many commitments made by the Central African Republic's friends and partners at the November donors conference. Together, we must sustain our focus and deliver on those commitments and pledges.

President Touadéra's Government is the lynchpin and the guide. We look forward to his leadership and his vision as he works to extend State authority, build institutions, fight impunity, promote reconciliation and disarm armed groups, with support from his friends and partners. The United States has committed to helping him rebuild and professionalize the armed forces, police and gendarmerie, consistent with his national security policy and with the five-year Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan. We believe that a genuine disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation process can be accomplished and sustained only alongside genuine security sector reform.

With reference to the demobilization, reintegration and repatriation process, we agree that the Government of the Central African Republic must be able to exercise authority over its entire territory. Armed actors must understand that their future lies not in being militants on the margins of society but in being productive contributing citizens of the Central African Republic. Their future, security and livelihoods are intertwined with the stabilization and long-term recovery of the Central African Republic.

This process is not easy. It does not happen quickly, and it does not involve overlooking crimes by allowing for blanket amnesty. But we also need to acknowledge that members of armed groups are often unwilling to disarm until they know that they will have a role and a voice in their Government, including in the security sector. We will continue to urge that security services be fully vetted, ethnically representative and regionally balanced, in order to achieve an equitable distribution. There cannot be parts of the Central African Republic that citizens are afraid to travel to or enclaves they are afraid to leave. We envision a day in which diverse, professional, well-trained Central African Republic security forces are composed of citizens of different religions and backgrounds and can ably protect the entirety of the country.

We commend the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) for its efforts to work hand in hand with the Central African Republic Government to rebuild its security services in a way that mentors and truly builds the capacity of the police, gendarmerie and military. MINUSCA's early programmes that preceded the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process in some of the Central African Republic's most fragile areas and its innovative community violence-reduction programmes have laid the foundation for a stronger partnership between the Central African Republic and the international community on more robust strategic planning and reforms.

When we see violence like the recent confrontations in Bambari, we are reminded that we still have much work to do. We commend MINUSCA for its willingness to take risks for its support for the Government, for its protection of civilians and for the provision of security in the Central African Republic. I would also like to take a moment to note that this week marked one year since the passage of resolution 2272 (2016) on sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeepers. MINUSCA has taken steps in the right direction but we have not yet wiped out the problem. We must remain dedicated to preventing acts of sexual exploitation and abuse, holding perpetrators to account and helping victims receive the assistance that they need.

In closing, we look forward to working to make MINUSCA an even more efficient and more effective peacekeeping mission.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I welcome President Touadéra of the Central African Republic to today's meeting, and thank Under-Secretary-General Hervé Ladsous and Ambassador Hilale for their briefings.

Thanks to the concerted efforts of the Government and the people of the Central African Republic and the relevant parties of the international community, the country has concluded its political transition and ushered in a new chapter in State-building. The Central African Republic is now pressing ahead with disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation efforts and security sector reform, and

working hard to restore national stability and pursue reconciliation, with positive results. China welcomes that development and commends the Government of the Central African Republic for their efforts under the stewardship of President Touadéra.

Meanwhile, we must be aware that the security situation in the country allows no complacency. There is a long way to go in rebuilding the State, and obstacles to achieving lasting peace and stability remain. The issues surrounding the Central African Republic can be resolved only through self-led inclusive political dialogue aimed at national reconciliation and a permanent, appropriate and sustainable solution.

The dialogue led by President Touadéra has provided a golden opportunity for the country to achieve stability and development. All parties in the country should act in the long-term interests of the country and its people, settle their differences through dialogue and consultation, and work together towards enduring peace, stability and development in the Central African Republic. To assist the Central African Republic in realizing peace and development, the international community should uphold the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, and support Africans in addressing their problems in their own way. It should also help the African Union (AU) and other regional and subregional organizations play a leading role, in that regard. The United Nations, together with the AU and other regional and subregional organizations, should enhance their coordination with the Government of the Central African Republic, and must fully respect its needs and will. All mediation efforts must go hand in hand with efforts towards national reconciliation.

The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) has played an important role in maintaining stability in the country. China supports MINUSCA's continuing mandate. During his visit to five African countries earlier this year, Mr. Wang Yi, the Chinese Minister for Foreign Affairs, conveyed China's goodwill and commitment to pursuing an African policy of sincerity, practical results, affinity and good faith; upholding the values of friendship, justice and shared interests; and actively supporting the cause of peace and development in Africa. Along with the international community, China is ready to renew its contribution to the pursuit of lasting peace, stability and development in the Central African Republic.

Mr. Iliichev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We would like to thank President Touadéra for sharing his point of view regarding the situation in his country. We also thank Under-Secretary-General Ladsous and the Permanent Representative of Morocco for their briefings, which were quite instructive.

The situation in the country remains precarious. Reprisals between tribes continue, crime and banditry are widespread, and sectarian and ethnic violence is rife. Government bodies and security forces in many parts of the country are failing or totally lacking. In spite of some breakthroughs on the security front in the capital, in the central and northern parts of the country there are ongoing deadly battles between armed groups engaging in turf wars. Last month's events around Bambari were a sad illustration of that reality.

It is evident that in a difficult military and political situation in the Central African Republic, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic is playing an important stabilizing role. However, given the situation on the ground, we note that Blue Helmets must often act as firefighting brigades. We are concerned about the deteriorating social, economic and humanitarian situation in the Central African Republic, along with the ongoing lack of financing to meet the humanitarian needs of the country. We call on all sides to ensure unhampered humanitarian access, and the Government to create conditions conducive to the safe, voluntary return of refugees and internally displaced persons to their homes.

The Central African authorities have to work on several fronts simultaneously in order to ensure the adequate functioning of the judiciary. In that context, the focus should be on rebuilding national capacity. Peacekeepers taking emergency temporary measures and the long-awaited creation of the special criminal court are not cure-alls for the country's problems in combating impunity. Furthermore, as world history shows, various types of courts with international participation are extremely costly and, in general, not very efficient.

We would also like to call attention to the demand of armed groups with respect to the awarding of general amnesty. In that regard, we must proceed with caution. Let us not forget the Bangui Forum of 2015, which culminated in an appeal for fighting against impunity.

It is clear that the country needs fundamental reforms and modernization. The disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and resettlement or repatriation process must be jumpstarted with the full assistance of the international community and with regional mediation. In that regard, we welcome the initiative of the African Union to launch the process of reconciliation between the Central African Republic Government and the armed groups. The sponsors of that initiative include the Economic Community of Central African States, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Chad.

We also welcome the initiative of President Touadéra to make national reconciliation more inclusive, as well as his intent to work with all armed groups. This is a window of opportunity that must not be lost. Those groups must be integrated into the political life of the country in order to put an end to the violence.

Mr. Bessho (Japan): Japan is very pleased to welcome President Touadéra to the Security Council today. His presence attests to the strong commitment of his Government to the consolidation of peace and the rebuilding of the nation. We are encouraged by the determination of the people of the Central African Republic, as evidenced by the Bangui Forum and the elections, in their quest for peace, stability and prosperity.

In response to the strong national ownership, regional and international partners are also increasingly committed and united in their support for the Government of the Central African Republic. I especially commend the devoted efforts of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) and its troop-contributing countries. I would like to assure Under-Secretary-General Ladsous and Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Central African Republic, Mr. Onanga-Anyanga, of Japan's support for the Mission's proactive and robust postures.

I have already had the pleasure of speaking in the presence of President Touadéra this morning in the Peacebuilding Commission, so I will be brief now.

The leaders of armed groups that have not yet laid down their arms must understand that there is more to be gained in the peace and reconstruction process than in war. The extension of State authority is an essential priority in delivering peace dividends to the population and avoiding its marginalization. Japan will continue to take part in reconstruction efforts through assistance for the most vulnerable, including refugees and internally displaced persons. That is why we have recently decided to provide $15.3 in new project assistance for the Central African Republic and vulnerable populations in neighbouring countries.

The Council is fully aware of the importance of conflict prevention and peacebuilding. We cannot afford to let the Central African Republic relapse into instability. Japan is committed to its ongoing support to the Government of the Central African Republic, led by President Touadéra, as part of our joint efforts to achieve sustainable peace.

Mr. Alemu (Ethiopia): We are very pleased to have His Excellency President Touadéra here at the Security Council this afternoon. We thank him for his presence here and for his important remarks. They were extremely useful and put matters in their proper perspective. We also thank Under-Secretary-General Ladsous and Ambassador Hilale, Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) Central African Republic configuration, for their respective briefings.

Although the Central African Republic continues to face enormous difficulties, we appreciate the positive developments under the leadership of President Touadéra. We fully support his Government's National Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan. The Central African Republic certainly needs the sustained support of the international community to ensure that its post-conflict reconstruction and peacebuilding endeavours are implemented successfully. We appreciate the role of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) is playing in that regard. We look forward to its even greater effectiveness, for which it will need much greater support.

The active engagement of the PBC through its Central African Republic Configuration remains very important in supporting the National Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan. Ambassador Hilale's statement is very useful, and we have taken note of what he had to say. The pledges made at the Brussels Conference on the Central African Republic and the African Union solidarity conference for the Central African Republic are also very welcome, and we hope they will be fulfilled.

We also commend the President's efforts in undertaking security sector reform, and welcome the progress made in disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation. Furthermore, we recognize his efforts to expand State authority in the entire country and reach out to the armed groups for dialogue. We have taken note of what he said a while ago with respect to the challenge the country is facing in this area. The resumption of renewed violence in various parts of the country is therefore a source of great concern. It is an indication that sustaining peace in the Central African Republic remains a serious and complex challenge. There is therefore a need for sustained efforts towards an all-inclusive national dialogue and reconciliation for the restoration of sustainable peace, social cohesion and stability.

In that context, we welcome the African Union initiative for peace and reconciliation in the Central African Republic, whose aim is to facilitate an agreement between the Government and armed opposition groups. That should be achieved without in any way allowing impunity or compromising on accountability, in order to create the necessary political conditions for peace, reconciliation, democracy and stability in the country. Three days ago, we had an opportunity to informally interact with the Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission to the Central African Republic on that important African initiative. We are indeed very pleased to hear today from President Touadéra about his views on the initiative. We understand that the goal is to support President Touadéra in his efforts to promote reconciliation and inclusive governance, while building on the conclusions of the Bangui Forum.

In conclusion, I would like to stress the importance of support to the President in his efforts to bring on board all those who are willing to contribute to building the country and to lay the basis for a durable peace in the Central African Republic. The President could not have been clearer with respect to how complex and challenging the tasks involved are in ensuring that the country is stabilized and begins the reconstruction process. We have no doubt that the African initiative will make a great contribution in that regard. We are hopeful that the Council will send a strong political message in support of the African initiative, and that the President will continue to be committed, as he said, to constructive dialogue.

Mr. Rosselli (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): It is an honour to have His Excellency President Touadéra present here at the Security Council. We would like thank him most especially for his efforts to bring about peace and stability in the Central African Republic.

We would also like to thank the Under-Secretary-General Ladsous and our colleague Ambassador Hilale, Chair of the Central African Republic configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, for their briefings. Uruguay would also like to commend the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Central African Republic, Mr. Onanga-Anyanga.

Today is an excellent opportunity to reaffirm the Council's commitment and engagement with the Central African Republic, as well as to support the consolidation of the situation through all means so that it does not fall back into conflict. We would also to highlight the fact that this briefing meeting promotes transparency in our work and encourages members of the Council to express their views publicly.

Just a few days after celebrating the first year of the presidency of Touadéra, the Central African Republic is in a better situation, with a return to constitutional order, a democratically elected Government, the formation of a new Government and the establishment of the National Assembly. A number of far-reaching reforms are already under way, including reforms in the security, defence and justice sectors, and programmes are in place for national reconciliation, disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation and reintegration of former fighters. We must therefore commend the Government of the Central African Republic and reiterate our support to it, while encouraging it the to continue along that path.

However, the recent events that took place in the Central African Republic show that the Government still has some significant challenges ahead. In that regard, Uruguay would express its concern with regard to the most recent report (S/2017/94) of the Secretary-General showing that in recent months there has been an increase in violence, including sporadic incidents in Bangui, attacks on peacekeeping personnel, along with ever-increasing confrontations between armed groups outside the capital. Uruguay condemns in the strongest terms the use of violence by the armed groups. We would encourage groups that have not yet done so to join the dialogue that was launched by the Government to resolve current problems in a peaceful way.

The deterioration in the humanitarian situation in the country is another source of concern. According to the recent report of the Secretary-General, and as Mr. Ladsous mentioned here in the Chamber, half of the population in the Central African Republic continues to need humanitarian aid, with many suffering from extreme food insecurity. Against that backdrop, it is crucial that the international community continue encouraging and supporting the efforts of the Government to bring about peace and stability.

The United Nations has renewed its commitment to the country, particularly through the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) and through the activities of the Peacebuilding Commission. We must highlight the vital role played by MINUSCA in protecting civilians, promoting and protecting human rights and international humanitarian law, as well as the support that MINUSCA provides to the national authorities for capacity-building, all of which put great operational demands on the Mission.

The recent presidential decree of 5 November created the institutional structure to apply, supervise and evaluate the modalities to fulfil the Mutual Engagement Framework and the National Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan. That will contribute greatly to channelling the efforts of international partners and to preserving the high-level political commitment undertaken by the country and the international community. In that regard, we reiterate that for all forms of cooperation extended to the Central to be successful, they must be done through consultations with the Government and complement the measures that are being implemented by the national authorities in the search for reconciliation in the country.

Mr. Cardi (Italy) (*spoke in French*): I thank His Excellency President for Touadéra for his statement, as well as the Permanent Mission of France and the British presidency for organizing this meeting. I would also like to thank Mr. Hervé Ladsous, Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, for his briefing, and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Parfait Onanga-Anyanga, for his work on the ground. We, of course, commend the efforts of the United Nations peacekeeping forces of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) to prevent armed groups from endangering the unity of the country and the security of its civilians.

Like the other the members of the Security Council, we are concerned about both the insecurity and the humanitarian situation in the Central African Republic, which remains one of the most serious in the world. Although the security and humanitarian situation continues to be fragile, the country is truly at a decisive turning point in its history. Accordingly, at the bilateral level, Italy has supported the Government of the Central African Republic since the beginning of its mandate. The President of the Republic, Sergio Mattarella, demonstrated that support in person to President Touadéra during his visit to Rome last year.

Our country has long stood by the people of the Central African Republic. Last October, our Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mario Giro, visited Bangui to launch bilateral projects and inaugurate the opening of the cooperation office by the Italian Development Cooperation, which coordinates numerous Italian activities in the Central African Republic, where there is a strong presence of agencies and non-governmental organizations, many of which are Catholic.

In that regard, let me emphasize the role that those organizations play in Central African society at various levels. I would point in particular to the Community of Sant'Egidio, which is an active player in promoting dialogue and reconciliation among the various components of Central African society, while ensuring the strengthening of Government institutions and full cooperation with the Government, the United Nations, the African Union, the countries of the region, the Catholic Church and the Muslim community. More generally, it is crucial that the Government of the Central African Republic enjoy the strong and determined support of the international community.

With regard to the economy, we listened very attentively to the briefing by Ambassador Hilale, Chair of the Central African Republic configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, who spoke about the work of the Commission to help the Government develop its National Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan. It is important that the Council continues to support the work of that body. Further, it is urgent that the goals of the Brussels Conference quickly become a reality. The European Union and its member States continue to stand with the Central African Republic.

At the political level, the African mediation initiative between the Government and armed groups appears to have the potential to generate the conditions

necessary for an inclusive peace agreement. If that important initiative is to be fully successful, it is important to ensure its full coordination with both the United Nations and the Government of the Central African Republic. We especially recognize the need for an active role of President Touadéra as a representative democratically elected by his fellow citizens.

The objective of any mediation initiative must be to strengthen the Government and the extend its authority throughout the Central African Republic in its territorial entirety so as to enable it to build up the security and promote the development of the country for the long-term. The question of reconciling the demand for justice with the inclusiveness of the peace process is central. In our view, the need to end the conflict in the Central African Republic is a priority. The civilian population is waiting for the relief that lasting peace will bring, ever conscious that impunity for the most serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law will not be tolerated.

To conclude, we support France's proposal for the Council to put forward a document clearly expressing its support for the Government and the African initiative that recalls the demand for cooperation with other regional organizations and the United Nations.

Mr. Yelchenko (Ukraine): I warmly welcome President Touadéra to the Security Council and thank him for his substantive and result-oriented statement. I also thank Under-Secretary-General Hervé Ladsous and the Permanent Representative of Morocco, Mr. Omar Hilale, for their informative briefings.

Ukraine reiterates its full support for President Touadéra and his Government's efforts to lead the country towards recovery, stability and development. Without any doubt, the free, peaceful and democratic holding of elections in 2016 began a new period in the history of the Central African Republic. In that regard, we welcomed the International Donors Conference on the Central African Republic that took place in Brussels in November 2016, resulting in pledges of significant resources to be used to further stabilize the country and rebuild its institutions. The Mutual Engagement Framework signed by the President of the Central African Republic and the Under-Secretary-General at the Conference serves as an important mechanism for political engagement between the country and the international community.

We recognize the challenges that the Central African Republic leadership faces on the path to peace and reconciliation. Like other delegations, ours is deeply concerned about the increased activities of armed groups and their ambitions to control considerable parts of the national territory. The continuing clashes among some of those groups continues to pose a threat to civilians, in particular in the central regions of the country.

The latest events around the city of Bambari involving tensions between the Union pour la paix en Centrafrique and the coalition led by the Front populaire pour la renaissance de la Centrafrique demonstrated that the security situation in the country remains fragile. Taking that into account, Ukraine supports peace and reconciliation efforts, including those within the framework of the mediation sponsored by regional States and organizations, provided that such efforts are undertaken in agreement with the Government of the Central African Republic. In that light, the African initiative for the peace and reconciliation agreement between the Government and all armed groups could serve as a practical tool to support the national leadership in persuading those groups to lay down their weapons and join the disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation process that was initiated by the President of the Central African Republic.

Ukraine reiterates its support for the adoption and signing by Central African authorities of the disarmament, demobilization, rehabilitation and reintegration programme, the national security policy and the development plan for the police and gendarmerie. The proper implementation of those strategic documents should advance significantly the process of disarmament and reform of the security sector in the Central African Republic.

It would be difficult to overestimate the vital role of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) in promoting peace and stability in the country. To that end, cooperation between MINUSCA and national authorities is essential. We are grateful to Special Representative Parfait Onanga-Anyanga for his tireless efforts.

Let me also stress the importance of proper compliance with the Council-mandated sanctions regime that was renewed by resolution 2339 (2017). As Chair of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 2127 (2013) concerning the Central African

Republic, I would like to positively note the spirit of cooperation between the Committee and the Central African Republic on the issue of implementing the sanctions regime. During my visit to the Central African Republic in May 2016, I had the opportunity to meet with the President and a number of his officials to promote further awareness of the sanctions, measures and the work of the Committee in general. In New York, we continue to cooperate constructively with his country's Permanent Mission.

Moreover, as Chair of the Committee, I would like to express certain concerns with regard to the reported failure to implement certain elements of the sanctions regime, in particular the travel ban and asset freeze. In that regard, although we understand the need to apply a flexible approach so as not to disrupt the reconciliation efforts undertaken through various initiatives, I call on all States, in particular neighbouring States and the concerned organizations, to actively use relevant exemption procedures in line with resolution 2339 (2017) and the 2127 Committee guidelines to ensure compliance with the existing regime, which was designed by the Council to make its important contribution to promoting peace and stability in the Central African Republic. As always, the Committee stands ready to assist in that process. The Council can count on us.

Mr. Seck (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): First of all, I would like to thank you, Sir, for convening today's briefing with the President of the Central African Republic. The Senegalese delegation welcomes Mr. Faustin Archange Touadéra, who, during his visit to the United Nations here in New York, wanted to take time out to inform us about developments in his country, in particular the resolute action that he and his Government are taking to restore lasting security and peace to the country in an effort to put it squarely on the path to development.

The Council recalls that it has already had the honour to welcome the President of the Central African Republic a few months ago, in June 2016, under the French presidency of the Council, to address the very important issue of the protection of civilians in armed conflict (see S/PV.7711). I would like to thank Ambassador Omar Hilale, Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission's Central African Republic configuration. We also thank Mr. Hervé Ladsous and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Parfait Onanga-Anyanga.

My delegation would like to pay a well deserved tribute to the leadership of President Touadéra, in particular for his efforts to engage the various armed groups in the quest for a political solution to the crisis in his country, through the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme and its advisory and monitoring committee, in which we hope all parties concerned will participate in short order. We believe that a return to peace and security requires commitment and perfect synergy among all institutions in the Central African Republic — including the National Assembly, guided by the President himself — as they each fully play their individual roles in the national reconciliation and reconstruction processes.

In addition to this much-needed domestic mobilization, active support must be maintained at the subregional and regional levels through he involvement of regional organizations in the stabilization process in the Central African Republic. In that regard, the Security Council is particularly interested in the African initiative for a peace and reconciliation agreement between the Government and armed groups. It is an initiative put forward by the African Union, the Economic Community of Central African States and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, with the support of other organizations, such as the European Union and the Organization of the Islamic Conference. It is because of that interest that the Security Council held an interactive informal dialogue early this week with the Special Representative of the African Union in the Central African Republic, who provided clear details of the initiative.

Like the majority of Council members, Senegal expressed its support for the initiative, especially given that it was presented as a way to shore up support for the courageous and coherent efforts in the areas of security, stabilization and national reconciliation. As the delegation of Senegal understands it, there must be synergy between regional initiatives and the policies implemented by the Government of the Central African Republic, which must all fulfil the hopes of the Central African people that were expressed at the Bangui Forum and be supported by the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA).

We are mindful that the Government of the country is expected to rise to the occasion on all fronts because the challenges are daunting and multifaceted. The Government must address disarmament, demobilization

and reintegration, security sector reform and national reconciliation, and provide emergency responses to the urgent social and humanitarian needs of the population. That is why we echo the President's call to strengthen international commitment in order to assist in reviving the country's economy and meeting the growing needs of the Central African people, including the large number of refugees and internally displaced persons.

In that regard, international partners must urgently honour the commitments they made during the Brussels Conference on the Central African Republic, which are estimated at $2.2 billion. It is important to note that without adequate financial resources, suitable technical training and coherent logistics, efforts to sustain peace in the Central African Republic could be jeopardized. In the same vein, we believe that the partnership between the Central African Republic and MINUSCA is essential to the normalization process, in particular with regard to restoring State authority. For us, the efforts under way in Bambari show the relevance of that partnership, especially as regards the return of administrative and judicial authorities to that strategic area.

We recall that Senegal is also involved in MINUSCA. It has deployed a formed police unit, a protection and security unit, an attack helicopter unit, as well as a Commanding General to the military component, which brings the total number of members of the Senegalese armed forces within MINUSCA to 420. We believe that the Mutual Engagement Framework that Mr. Ladsous just described is particularly important in that regard. I can assure the President that my country will remain committed to the Government and brotherly people of the Central African Republic in their tireless quest for national reconciliation and reconstruction under his leadership.

My delegation supports the recommendations put forward on the basis of the MINUSCA review carried out in October 2016, in particular those noting that the holding of local elections and ongoing decentralization will help to strengthen the peacekeeping and peacebuilding processes.

Mr. Umarov (Kazakhstan): My delegation welcomes His Excellency Mr. Faustin Archange Touadéra, President of the Central African Republic, to New York and thanks him for his very insightful analysis of his country's trajectory of development. We also thank today's briefers — Under-Secretary-General Hervé Ladsous and the Permanent Representative of Morocco, Mr. Omar Hilale — for their substantive updates. Let me give my delegation's observations on the three main aspects — political, security and humanitarian — of the situation.

Kazakhstan commends and supports the leadership of President Touadéra in facilitating inclusive political dialogue, which commenced on 12 October 2016, by bringing together various actors to the negotiating table. It is the only way to bring peace to the country. We welcome the decision of the anti-balaka group to join the dialogue. We praise the national disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation strategy, as well as the national programme for reconciliation and social cohesion adopted in November 2016, which should all be strictly adhered to.

Recently launched by the African Union, the Economic Community of Central African States, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, Angola, Congo and Chad, the initiative for peace and reconciliation agreement between the Government and all armed group in the Central African Republic is another possible platform for negotiations. The mediating role of the African Union in the process is central and must be fully supported by the international community. Those two political initiatives must supplement and reinforce each other to optimally accelerate the stabilization of the security situation on the ground.

Secondly, ongoing clashes in many parts of the country — especially the recent fight for Bambari between the Union pour la paix en Centrafrique and the Front populaire pour la renaissance de la Centrafrique — are presently making the security situation in the Central African Republic very fragile. We welcome the military action by the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) to protect the civilian population and take control of Bambari.

Kazakhstan strongly condemns attacks on United Nations peacekeepers and convoys. Furthermore, such armed groups run the risk of exposing themselves to additional international sanctions, which must be followed strictly. Regional structures and institutions with influence are urged to do everything in their power to end the armed groups' violence. Kazakhstan hopes that the functioning of the Special Criminal Court and the appointment of the new prosecutor, with the

support of MINUSCA, will help to combat impunity. This new legal framework should serve as impetus for the remaining armed groups to join the disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and rehabilitation process.

We support the high level of cooperation between the Government of the Central African Republic and MINUSCA, which the Council must sustain on all fronts. We also encourage the Government to own greater responsibility and accountability for rehabilitating the country, with the support of the United Nations system and the country team. That should be achieved in collaboration with regional organizations, financial institutions and all stakeholders, supported by the international community.

Thirdly, we commend President Touadéra's efforts to bring about economic recovery in his country. The humanitarian situation continues to be complex. Almost half of the population — approximately 2 million people — depends on humanitarian aid. The number of internally displaced persons has reached almost 60,000 since October of last year. Kazakhstan therefore shares the opinion stated here by President Touadéra with regard of the need for greater strengthening of the security/development nexus as the bedrock for stabilization, reconciliation and the development of the Central African Republic.

Hence it is very important that organizations and Governments honour their commitment of more than $2.2 billion in pledges made at the Brussels Conference on 17 November 2016. Likewise, proper and vigilant use of funds would greatly contribute to the five-year National Plan for Recovery and Peacebuilding. The recent African Union solidarity conference on post-conflict reconstruction and development, as well we as peacebuilding efforts in the Central African Republic during the AU conference in Addis Ababa, are fine examples to foster development and reconciliation. We encourage the launching of similar initiatives to benefit the country.

Let me conclude by reiterating our readiness to join multilateral action to support President Touadéra and the Central African Republic in moving forward towards stability, peace and progress.

Mr. Skoog (Sweden): I want to start by thanking Under-Secretary-General Ladsous and my colleague Ambassador Hilale of Morocco, Chair of the Central African Republic country-specific configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, for their briefings. I would also like to join others in welcoming President Touadéra to the Security Council and by thanking him for his appraisal of the current situation and the challenges and opportunities facing the Central African Republic. We strongly support the efforts of President Touadéra towards a Central African Republic where all citizens can live in peace.

The ongoing work on the formal disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and rehabilitation (DDRR) framework is of particular importance. It is critical to continue to advance the national dialogue in ways the build on the results of the Bangui Forum. The Government, the region and the international community must speak with one voice on that issue, thereby ensuring a coherent approach to armed groups and avoiding damage to public trust.

The African initiative for a peace and reconciliation agreement is very welcomed, and should be carefully coordinated with national efforts and should support the implementation of Security Council resolutions. The effective participation of women in all reconciliation, transitional justice and DDRR frameworks is key to sustainable results.

Ending impunity is a prerequisite for true reconciliation. At the Bangui Forum, the people of President Touadéra's country made an unequivocal plea for justice, which must be delivered upon in the context of nationally agreed processes, as he indicated. We look forward to the human rights report by the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA). Its findings should be followed up on, not least in view of the operationalization of the special criminal court. We encourage the Government, in its efforts to improve accountability, to take full advantage of the support provided by MINUSCA and of the court.

While security in Bangui has improved, people across the Central African Republic continue to live under the threat of violence. We are deeply concerned about the recent events in Bambari, which risk leading to a de facto east-west partition. To avoid that, it is vital that the State re-establish its authority in the city. The recent visit to the city by President Touadéra is a very important signal. We heard today about the dire humanitarian situation and new displacements. I am glad to say that we remain a major humanitarian donor. We urge others to respond to the appeal made today by the President for further funds going to his

country. The protection of civilians remains a priority. We are encouraged by the robust action by MINUSCA in that regard in Bambari. Further measures and flexible adaptation to the fast-evolving situation will be necessary.

We welcome President Touadéra's participation at the Peacebuilding Commission earlier today, as well as the configuration's intention to further intensify efforts to support the National Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan. To re-establish and extend State authority over the whole of the territory and to prevent a relapse into widespread hostilities, peacebuilding efforts are important, including the capacity of the public administration throughout the country.

I want to stress that there must be zero tolerance for sexual exploitation and abuse for all peacekeeping and United Nations staff, uniformed as well as civilian. We note with great concern that allegations of further abuse by United Nations staff still persist in the Central African Republic. Victims, both women and men, boys and girls, need to be protected, assisted and compensated, while perpetrators must be brought to justice. The United Nations must never lack the power to act to hold those responsible to account. We welcome the leadership of the Secretary-General on the issue, including his vision for a new strategy to address sexual exploitation and abuse, with a clear focus on victims' rights.

In conclusion, it is imperative that we continue to support the efforts of President Touadéra and his Government and that we remain focused on supporting a peaceful Central African Republic at this critical moment.

Mr. Llorentty Soliz (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, my delegation would like to welcome the presence of His Excellency Mr. Faustin Archange Touadéra, President of the Central African Republic. It is a genuine privilege to have him with us. We believe that his being here is not just testimony to his commitment to the United Nations, but it also affords us a unique opportunity to support the efforts of his Government and his people to find lasting peace based on social justice.

Bolivia would also like to express its gratitude for the briefing by Mr. Ladsous, as well as that by His Excellency Ambassador Omar Hilale, Permanent Representative of Morocco.

We acknowledge the progress and efforts made and the challenges faced by the Central African Republic to achieve peace. We express our support for the democratically elected Government on the path charted to find peace in line with its sovereignty and independence.

Bolivia would like to highlight and commend the work done by the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic and its efforts to stabilize the country by precisely following its mandate, providing humanitarian assistance, protecting civilians and carrying out activities to ensure disarmament, peace and security. We also express our concern about the worsening violence in recent months, which is mainly affecting civilians and leading to instability on the political, social and humanitarian fronts. The country's civilians are the ones being affected by that violence, and it is they who must bear the brunt, including humanitarian consequences such as displacement and being forced to become refugees.

Bolivia also absolutely rejects the use of force. As a pacifist country, we urge the armed groups to lay down their weapons and to set aside sectarian interests of all types that may impede the dialogue from producing results so that agreements can be finalized to put an end to the conflict.

We take note of the African initiative that encompasses the main outcomes of the Bangui Forum, which set out compromise terms with regard to peace, security, justice, reconciliation, governance and economic reconstruction, in addition to the issues of combating impunity and ensuring that no social or political segment is excluded from the dialogue.

Bolivia also urges the international community to continue to contribute actively to mobilize adequate resources to help the Central African Republic establish peace and social justice. We believe that the involvement of regional organizations and the participation of the African Union and neighbouring countries have been and will continue to be critical in political initiatives to achieve peace and muster support for a sustainable reconciliation process, using African solutions for African problems. We note the efforts of the President of the Central African Republic to identify ways to achieve rapprochement, peace and understanding through inclusive dialogue and to lay the foundations for the stability required by its people to enjoy peace

and stability and to agree, through a sovereignty and independent Central African intitiative, on what is most beneficial to the country in a context of of the law, justice, reconciliation and peace.

The factors in achieving those objectives being well defined — a democratically elected Government and the cooperation and involvement of regional organizations — the only way to resolve problems is through a negotiated political solution and to clearly establish Central African ownership of that solution, with respect for its sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of the United Kingdom.

I would like to begin by welcoming President Touadéra to the Council and thanking him for his briefing, as well as the other briefers for theirs.

It has been a significant 12 months for the Central African Republic. The peaceful and credible elections that saw President Touadéra elected were a welcome moment of hope for a country that has endured crisis for far too long. And the National Plan for Recovery and Peacebuilding, agreed in November, sets out a clear pathway forward. It will move the country on and away from the cycle of conflict. In that effort, the Central African Republic will have the international community's support, including $44 million from the United Kingdom.

But the Central African Republic needs more than just plans and pledges. What it really needs is implementation delivery, both by the Government and by us in the international community, because as the past 12 months have sadly shown, progress is fragile. The hope of March 2016 risks being replaced by the violence, displacement, humanitarian emergency and fear of the past. Having come so far, the risk of reversal, the risk of deterioration and a return to the chaos of the past are now a painful reality that we must confront. In response, we see four steps.

First, the Government of the Central African Republic, with the support of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), must secure an agreement with armed groups to cease attacks on civilians, as well as for their disarmament and demobilization. They cannot be allowed to derail progress in pursuit of their own short-term self interest.

Secondly, more effort needs to be made on the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-Séléka faction and anti-Balaka groups. We welcome the President's consultative committee as the formal framework for disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, with all armed groups represented, as we heard today. Efforts to support mediation, in particular the Angola-led African initiative, are all welcome. Any initiative must support the President's authority, be in coordination with the United Nations, and respect the will of the Central African Republic people to end impunity, as demonstrated at the Bangui Forum.

Thirdly, for long-term stability, it is essential that the Central African Republic's own armed forces can provide the security and stability that the people deserve. That means reform of the armed forces, and we stand ready to support the country in that effort.

Fourthly and finally, if the Central African Republic is to move beyond the violence, there must be accountability. Not only will that bring justice for those who have suffered, but it will also send a clear message to armed groups that they cannot kill and maim with impunity. The Council has given its support for the development of a special criminal court and mandated MINUSCA to help make it happen. And now we need to see implementation.

In conclusion, the Central African Republic is at a critical juncture. There is a possibility for sustainable peace, but that possibility narrows as the security situation deteriorates. Having endured conflict and chaos for so long, and having stepped away from the brink of genocide in 2014, the people of the Central African Republic deserve a peaceful future, not a return to a hateful past. We stand ready to support President Touadéra so that the Central African Republic can finally break the cycle of conflict.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers.

The meeting rose at 4.55 p.m.